**Seir Kieran’s National School**

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**Seir Kieran’s NS SEN Policy**

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# Introduction

The purpose of this policy is to provide practical guidance for teachers, parents and other relevant parties on the effective teaching support to pupils experiencing low achievement and/ or learning/ social/ emotional difficulties, as well as to fulfil relevant legislative and procedural responsibilities. This policy relates to pupils enrolled in mainstream classes and to supporting the work in our ‘Le Chéile’ class. This policy was originally composed in 2017 and is now being reviewed in the context of changes in the school since as well as taking into account up to date advice on the subject of special needs from all the relevant groups.

In developing and reviewing this policy particular consideration was given to the following documentation:

* DES Circulars
* NEPS: A Continuum of Support

Guidelines, procedures and advice provided by the National Psychology Service (NEPS), National Council for Special Education (NCSE), Special Education Support Service (SESS) and Professional Development Service for Teachers (PDST) also contributed to this policy.

# School Context

Seir Kieran’s National School is a vertical co-educational primary school with an ASD class called ‘Le Chéile’, operating under the patronage of the Bishop of Ossory. There are 68 enrolled for the 2022/ 23 school year. 6 of these children are in ‘Le Chéile’. While ‘Le Chéile’ operates under the conditions and guidelines as are set out by the DES, it always remains the aim of Seir Kieran’s NS, to integrate these children into the pupil population as much as possible. Our SEN team working together is pivotal to making this happen. Please refer to our policies on ‘ Le Chéile’ for further details on how this special needs aspect of our school operates.

# Guiding Principles

* Implementation of effective whole-school policies
* Setting suitable learning challenges and differentiating the level of work as a means of responding to pupils’ diverse learning needs
* A comprehensive programme of screening, assessment and identification of pupils’ additional learning needs
* The implementation of a prevention and early intervention programmes in the areas of literacy and numeracy
* Direction of resources towards pupils in greatest need
* Co-ordination of referrals to relevant external services where appropriate

# Aims & Objectives

* To ensure that all children gain access to a broad and balanced curriculum and have opportunity of access to an appropriate education
* To set out the whole-school approach to teaching and learning of pupils with additional learning needs/ special education needs (SEN)
* To assist parents in making an informed decision in relation to the enrolment of their child(ren) in the school
* To develop a partnership with parents and/ or guardians
* To promote an inclusive environment in the school
* To outline the procedures and practices to be followed in relation to supporting the learning needs of pupils with additional learning needs/ special education needs
* To use the SEN teaching resources effectively, efficiently and in line with best practice
* To enable pupils with additional needs/ SEN to share, with their peers, as complete and inclusive an educational experience as possible
* To optimise the teaching and learning processes to enable pupils with learning difficulties to achieve adequate levels of proficiency, insofar as it is possible and considering pupils’ overall ability levels, in literacy and numeracy before leaving primary school.

# Roles and Responsibilities

In attempting to achieve these aims and objectives the school will take all reasonable steps within the limits of the resources available to fulfil the requirements set out in this policy.

## Board of Management

The Board of Management has an important role in overseeing the development, review and implementation of the SEN Policy. This includes:

* Review and discuss standardised test results in accordance with Circular 56/2011
* Oversee the development, implementation and review of the policy
* Ensure that adequate classroom accommodation and teaching resources are provided
* Provide adequate funds for the purchase of materials
* Provide a secure facility for the storage of records

## Principal

The principal is responsible for the day-to-day management of SEN provision. The principal will work closely with the staff in the co-ordination of special education and will keep the Board of Management informed on the working of the policy.

## SEN Co-ordinator

The Principal will assume the responsibilities of this role in September 2022. The school is in the process of reorganising management duties, so the role of SEN Co - ordinator maybe assigned to another teacher on staff, in the future.

## Special Education Teacher

* Assisting in the implementation of a broad range of whole school strategies designed to enhance early learning and prevent learning difficulties
* Development of student support files for pupils who are selected for supplementary teaching in consultation with the class teacher and parents
* Maintaining short term planning for each individual or group of pupils in receipt of learning support
* Assisting with the planning of and delivery of intensive early intervention programmes to pupils in Junior Classes and in classes where it is deemed necessary to improve the levels of literacy and numeracy
* Providing teaching support to pupils in accordance with this policy
* Contributing to the development of policy at the whole school level and at the cluster level where applicable
* Liaising with class teacher, the principal and parents on planning for individual pupil’s needs and progress
* Conducting diagnostic assessments and collaborate with class teachers in relation to the administration of screening assessments
* Maintaining and reviewing pupil records
* Have at least one formal meeting with Parent per year to address needs
* Consult with class teacher about timetabling and cooperating with particular programmes being implemented in class.
* Accompany junior pupils from class where support is out of class
* Work alongside the class teacher to put differentiated programmes of work in place for children with SEN.

## Class Teacher

The class teacher has primary responsibility for the pupils’ learning needs within his/ her class. The responsibilities of the class teacher include:

* Plan and deliver a differentiated programme of work for pupils with additional needs within the classroom
* Making parents aware of the concerns of the school about their child’s progress
* Support the Special Education Teacher with the administration of screening assessments and liaise with the Special Education Teacher regarding diagnostic tests
* Attending meeting between Special Education Teacher and pupil’s parents
* Consult and co-operate with Special Education Teacher on pupils’ IEPs and support files
* Be alert to the possibility that some children may have a specific learning difficulty and bring it to the attention of the Special Education Teacher
* Differentiate class programmes to suit the needs of pupils
* Where there is a classroom assistant, outline their duties clearly for the instructional term.
* Consult with Special Education Teacher re: timetabling, planning and programme delivery

## Special Needs Assistant (SNA)

The purpose of the SNA scheme is to provide for the significant additional care needs, which some pupils with special educational needs may have. An SNA’s role is to carry out duties based on the Primary Care Needs of the pupil. These may include:

* Assistance with feeding: Where a pupil with special needs requires adult assistance and where the extent of assistance required would overly disrupt normal teaching time
* Administration of medicine: Where a pupil requires adult assistance to administer medicine and where the extent of assistance required would overly disrupt normal teaching time
* Assistance with mobility and orientation: On an ongoing basis including assisting a pupil or pupils to access the school, the classroom, with accessing school transport (where provided, school Bus Escorts should, in the first instance, assist a pupil to access school transport), or to help a pupil to avoid hazards in or surrounding the school.
* Assisting teachers to provide supervision in the class, playground and school grounds: At recreation, assembly, and dispersal times including assistance with arriving and departing from school for pupils with special needs where the school has made a robust case that existing teaching resources cannot facilitate such supervision
* Non-nursing care needs associated with specific medical conditions: Such as frequent epileptic seizures or for pupils who have fragile health
* Care needs requiring frequent interventions including withdrawal of a pupil from a classroom when essential: This may be for safety or personal care reasons, or where a pupil may be required to leave the class for medical reasons or due to distress on a frequent basis
* Assistance with moving and lifting of pupils, operation of hoists and equipment
* Assistance with severe communication difficulties including enabling curriculum access for pupils with physical disabilities or sensory needs and those with significant, and identified social and emotional difficulties. Under the direction of the teacher, this might include assistance with assistive technology equipment, typing or handwriting, supporting transition, assisting with supervision at recreation, dispersal times etc.

The tasks noted above are the primary care support tasks for which access to SNA support is provided. The following tasks are the type of secondary care associated tasks which SNAs will often perform, but only after the list of primary care support tasks listed above, have been addressed. The indicative list of secondary associated tasks listed below is not definitive and is reflective of the tasks detailed in Circulars 08/02 and 71/2011. The associated support tasks which may be carried out include:

* Preparation and tidying of workspaces or assisting a pupil who is not physically able to perform such tasks to prepare and tidy a workspace, to present materials, to display work, or to transition from one lesson activity to another
* Assistance with the development of Personal Pupil Plans for pupils with special educational needs, with a particular focus on developing a care plan to meet the care needs of the pupil concerned and the review of such plans
* Assist in preparation of school files and materials relating to care and assistance required in class by students with special needs
* Planning for activities and classes where there may be additional care requirements associated with particular activities, liaising with Class Teachers and other Teachers such as the Resource Teacher and School Principal, attending meetings with Parents, SENO, NEPS Psychologists, or school staff meetings with the agreement and guidance of class Teacher/Principal
* Assistance to attend or participate in out of school activities: walks, or visits, where teaching staff or parents cannot provide such assistance
* Liaising with other SNAs in the school
* Flexibility around reassignment to other children/ classes.

While SNAs are assigned to positions in the mainstream setting and ‘Le Chéile’ setting each year, it is expected that all SNAs will be flexible to being redeployed at short notice to work in either setting so as to fully maximise the resources available to the school, in the best interests of pupils with special needs.

## Parents

* To be actively involved in the child’s learning
* To provide the school with any information regarding the child’s additional needs as early as possible
* Be involved in creating a positive attitude towards school
* Be involved in the compilation of support files and attend meetings with staff and other information sessions
* Supporting and actively participating in the child’s learning including fulfilling the parental responsibilities as is outlined in the student’s support file
* Ensuring that the child’s attendance levels are as high as possible and that homework is fully completed to the child’s best ability

## Pupils

Active and meaningful participation by pupils is key to success. The following is expected of pupils:

* Maintain adequate levels of attendance and punctuality
* Maintain good levels of discipline and demonstrate respectful behaviour to staff and other pupils
* In the case of children in senior classes, invite them where appropriate to contribute to the content of their support files.
* Complete school-work and homework to the best of their ability

## Other Professionals

Other professionals such as Educational Psychologists, Clinical Psychologists, Speech & Language Therapists, Occupational Therapists, Psychiatrists, Behavioural Therapists and Visiting Teachers etc. may be involved through assessments, needs identification, therapeutic intervention and offering consultation and advice in relation to appropriate approaches and interventions.

# Intervention & Prevention of Learning Difficulties

The following are the key intervention programmes and strategies to prevent learning difficulties for pupils:

* Close collaboration between the teachers in all classes and the Special Education Teacher co-ordinator and principal
* We have purposely organised classes so as Infants are in a two-stream setting, in order to provide them with the best opportunity to have early learning difficulties intervened with and prevented. In the remaining three stream class situations, we will observe groupings carefully so as to ensure that all grouping are meeting key learning outcomes areas in literacy and numeracy. A class grouping maybe withdrawn from time to time to provide them with the necessary support and to allow for others to get more focused attention. The school is very mindful that pupils may not be not be getting a fair opportunity in a three class stream setting to achieve various learning outcomes in numeracy in particular. In this context the class teacher and the SEN teacher will meet at the end of each half term, to review and plan how we can best meet the needs of children with special needs within all these groupings.
* In so far as we can, we will put carefully focused delivery of Early Intervention Programmes from Junior Infants to Second Class (including In-Class Support; Phonological Awareness & Oral Language Development Programmes and small group tuition in language, literacy and numeracy)
* There will be a strong focus on oral language, development of emergent reading, phonological awareness skills and phonics. This reflects the interconnected nature of listening, speaking, reading and writing
* Differentiated learning programmes for pupils within the classroom setting
* Provision of information to parents on the learning activities they can engage in with their children in the home to support learning
* Progress of pupils is reviewed each instructional term and there will be a focus on an effective screening and diagnostic assessment programme (see section 7A & B below)
* There will be a focus on children experiencing success reading simple texts, suited to their ability and self-esteem is enhanced.

# Identification, Screening & Assessment and Referral Procedures

## Identification

Identification of learning or other difficulties and appropriate intervention will follow the three stage process summarised as follows:

### Stage I: Classroom Support

Classroom Support is the first response to emerging needs or concerns in the following areas: learning, social, physical, behavioural or emotional. It is co-ordinated by the class teacher and carried out within the regular classroom. It is a response for pupils who have distinct or individual educational needs and who require approaches to learning that are additional to or different from those required by other pupils in their class.

The SEN co ordinator and principal may be involved in an advisory capacity. If the concerns raised can be successfully addressed at this level, no further action will be required. At this stage additional support is provided within the classroom by the class teacher who will draw up a short, simple plan for extra help to be implemented in the classroom in the relevant areas of learning and/ or behavioural management in consultation with the parents. The plan should include support activities which can be accomplished at home.

The success of the plan will be reviewed regularly, with appropriate parental involvement. If concerns remain after a number of reviews and adaptations to the plan the child will be referred to the SEN co ordinator and principal for further assessment to determine suitability for progression to the School Support Stage.

### Stage II: School Support

If intervention is considered necessary at School Support Stage, then the pupil will be referred to the SEN co ordinator for further diagnostic testing. If this diagnostic assessment suggests that supplementary teaching would be beneficial, this will be arranged.

Following consultation with the parents, the class teacher and the Special Education Teacher will draw up a support plan which may include appropriate interventions for implementation in the classroom, in the SEN setting and in the home.

The school has seen success in it’s policy to create smaller numbers of pupils to deliver in the areas of literacy and numeracy. In recent years the school has received teacher feedback which indicated that pupils with special needs really benefitted from working in small groups with their peers. We in turn witnessed improvements in the standardised scores of SEN pupils in literacy and numeracy where they operated in smaller groups with individual teachers. The practice of deploying the Special Education Teacher so as to create smaller groups so as to give that focused attention to a pupil at school support stage maybe used, particularly where the pupil is in an older class.

The rate of progress of each pupil receiving supplementary teaching is reviewed regularly. If significant concerns remain after a number of reviews and adaptations to the learning programme, then it may be necessary to provide interventions at Stage III: School Support Plus.

### Stage III: School Support Plus

School support plus is the level of intervention for children with complex and/ or diagnosed low-incidence needs and whose levels of attainment and progress are considered inadequate despite carefully planned interventions at the previous levels.

At this stage, the school may refer the case to the NEPS Psychologist and other professionals (e.g. Speech & Language Therapist, OT, Clinical Psychologist, Psychiatrist, Audiologists etc.)

Following assessment it may be necessary to apply to the National Council for Special Education (NCSE) for additional resources for the child, including extra SET Hours or SNA Support.

In this case, a support plan will be developed, implemented and reviewed.

In the case of pupils identified at an early age as having very significant special educational needs, intervention at Stage III will be necessary much earlier, possibly before their entry to school.

Support in the classroom will be an essential component of any learning programme.

## Screening & Assessment

Teacher observation, and the concerns/ information provided by parents, are powerful tools in the identification of learning difficulties.

However, the use of robust screening and diagnostic assessments are key components in an effective identification and intervention programme.

The following list outlines some of the key screening and assessment measures that are used at the school to help identify pupils who are, or may be at risk of learning difficulties. These assessments also help to identify the specific areas of need for pupils.

### Whole-Group Screening & Standardised Assessments

The following screening measures will be used at whole-class level as follows and for the following purposes:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Test** | **Class Level** | **Purpose** |
| Drumcondra Early Literacy Test –Screening  Drumcondra Early Numeracy Test – Screening | Senior Infants | To screen for pupils who may possess difficulties which with the view to putting early intervention strategies in place. |
| Middle Infant Screening Test | Senior Infants | To screen for issues regarding letter sounds and letter formation. |
| Drumcondra Primary Reading Test | First – Sixth Class | To provide information on the reading levels of pupils and compare reading performances with general ability |
| Drumcondra Primary Maths Test | First – Sixth Class | To provide information on the mathematical levels of pupils and compare ability in maths with general ability |
| Non Reading Intelligence Test | First Class | Tests assess aspects of language and thinking that are not necessarily represented in measures of pupil attainments, and help to pinpoint low achieving and slow reading pupils who may nevertheless have high underlying ability |

**Other whole group administered screening tests which may be used include:**

* Spelling: The Single Word Spelling Test; The British Spelling Test Series; Vernon Graded Word Spelling Test; Vernon
* Ballard and Westwood One minute table test
* Micra T (1st Class)

### Diagnostic Tests

The following diagnostic tests may be used by the SEN coordinator to further investigate the learning abilities and needs of pupils referred following classroom-based assessment and screening tests:

Drumcondra Early Literacy Test

Drumcondra Early Numeracy Test

Belfield Infant Assessment Profile

WIST – Wilson Word Identification and Spelling Test

NARA

Literacy Probe

Phonological Awareness Test

Verbal Reasoning Neer and Nelson

## Procedure for Referral to Outside Agencies

The school is closely linked with the following services and in many cases may refer pupils directly, in consultation with parents, for further screening measures, assessments and/ or interventions:

* Community Speech & Language Services
* Community Occupational Therapy Services
* Community Psychology Services
* Offaly Early Intervention Service (OEIS)
* The School Age Disability Team (SADT)
* The Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS)
* The National Educational Psychology Service (NEPS)

The school can provide some information to parents who may wish to engage private professional services.

# Allocation of Special Education Need’s Teaching Hours

Selection Criteria for Special Education Need’s Teaching Hours is granted on the basis of diagnoses of the following low incidence disabilities as recognised by the DES:

1. Physical Disability
2. Hearing Impairment
3. Visual Impairment
4. Behavioural/ Emotional Disturbance
5. Severe Emotional Disturbance
6. Moderate General Learning Disability
7. Severe/ Profound General Learning Disability
8. Autism/ Autism Spectrum Disorder
9. Specific Speech & Language Disorder
10. Assessed Syndrome in conjunction with one of the above low incidence disabilities
11. Multiple Disabilities

Under the current model, special education teaching Hours are allocated to the school, not individual children, and the school will allocate these hours in the best way possible to meet the needs of pupils. Pupils will be taken on a one to one basis with all child protection guidelines adhered to as per our Child Safeguarding statement. Pupils with needs may also be taken in pairs or small groups. In three stream classes, where difficulty is identified in pupils attaining learning outcomes in literacy and numeracy, it may be necessary at times to withdraw class groupings so as to provide for children who are having difficulties in particular areas, to have these needs addressed in a focused and sensitive manner. This may also involve grouping children, particularly in the cases of social or communication difficulties. Occasionally, the delivery of behaviour/ emotional interventions is suitable for delivery at whole-class and where this is the case this will be the means of instruction/ tuition.

Outside of the above defined low incidence disabilities, allocation of pupils to Special Education Need’s Teaching will be dependent on caseload capacity of pupils who have defined diagnoses. Where hours are available, the principal in consultation with the teaching staff will assign hours to the categories below, prioritising the categories a) and c). The remaining categories will be prioritised in a way that makes best utilisation of the resources.

1. Children who have been diagnosed or are at risk of having specific learning difficulties and high incidence disabilities which are hindering learning including: borderline to mild General Learning Difficulties mild speech & language difficulties, emotional/ behavioural disturbance (EBD); and specific learning difficulties.
2. Early Intervention Programmes from Junior Infants to Second Class (In-Class Support including with Aistear; Phonological Awareness & Oral Language Development Programmes; and small group tuition in language, literacy and numeracy)
3. Use of Standardised Test Results; At the end of each school year the principal in conjunction with the SEN co-ordinator will assess the individual results of pupils with a view to establishing which pupils have the greatest needs. (Refer to the continuum of support)
4. Numeracy Support; In a three stream of classes with three different mathematical curricula, it may be deemed best to use resources in withdrawing a particular grouping thus affording teachers more opportunities to work on a one to one basis with pupils who are struggling to comprehend various numerical concepts.

## Continuation and Discontinuation

The progress of each pupil who is in receipt of such teaching should be evaluated at the end of each instructional term, and, following consultation with the pupil’s class teacher and parents, a decision should be taken about the level of support that can be provided by the Special Education Teacher in the future. Depending on the pupil’s needs, this may range from infrequent monitoring and assessment to more frequent and intensive supplementary teaching. The school’s policy on continuation/ discontinuation and the way in which it is implemented will have implications for the number of additional pupils who can be provided with supplementary teaching for the first time in each instructional term.

A meeting will be held at the beginning of the school year and at the end of each instructional term (e.g. January and June) with the parents in cases where supplementary teaching is to be commenced or continued to discuss the learning targets and activities in the pupil’s support plan.

Supplementary teaching will normally be discontinued where the targets have been met.

The school’s procedure in relation to discontinuing support teaching/ discharging pupils from SEN teaching is as follows:

* Where a child, following a sustained period of support teaching is performing to his/ her ability level as determined by reference to attainment and cognitive ability assessments, and has achieved adequate/ expected levels of competency in language, literacy and numeracy
* In some cases discharge from SEN teaching support may occur where it is determined, following review and analysis of progress made and in consultation with parents and relevant professionals (where necessary), that the intensive support offered through SEN teaching is no longer required.

Discharge from SEN teaching may involve the provision of a differentiated support programme for the pupil(s) which would include steps to be implemented in the classroom and home settings.

# Parental Consent

In individual cases of withdrawal, written parental consent will be sought prior to SEN commencing. Consent for diagnostic testing was received from parents upon enrolment and this will continue to be the practice going forward.

# Timetabling, Planning & Record-Keeping

In the context of Special Education Need’s provision, we will aim to provide teaching instruction as soon as possible within the school year, it is our objective that only the first week of each school year will be used to put an effective timetable in place but this will depend on the complexity of the caseloads we are dealing with. In particular screening tests may be carried out to ascertain where certain pupils are within this period. Croke Park Hours will be used in as far as possible to allow teacher on teacher consultation and for the principal and the SEN coordinator to define the timetable.

Agreed support plan templates will be used to support SET planning and will be co-ordinated by the special education teacher in consultation with class teachers, parents and SNAs where relevant.

# Mainstream SEN and Le Chéile

While Mainstream SEN and Le Chéile each operate in their own right, in Seir Kieran’s NS every opportunity will be taken to have both working together. Where children in Le Cheile are ready to integrate into the mainstream setting, this opportunity will be fully availed of with the Special Education Teachers , SNAs and Class Teachers all working closely together. Each month, time will also be allocated to allow for the school’s whole special educational staff to sit down, discuss and share positive experiences and practices and to share with one another challenges which are being faced in special education and how we as a school can work together to overcome these challenges.

Please refer to our ‘Le Chéile’ policy for specifics on how special needs are catered for here.

# Exemptions from the Study of Irish

In the context of pupils with special education needs, exemptions from the Study of Irish may be granted by the school principal, in accordance with the school’s policy on ‘Exemptions from the Study of Irish’ which the staff and Board of Management drafted in response to the Department’s guidance and advice on ‘Exemptions from the Study of Irish’.

# Homework

See homework policy for further details.

When allocating homework to pupils in receipt of special education teaching, a balance should be struck between the guideline homework times for each class and the need for additional work to be undertaken to address attainment gaps/ underachievement.

This will require collaboration between classroom teacher, Special Education teacher and parents.

# Monitoring & Review

School management will ensure that SET provision is an integral part of the school development plan and will evaluate the effectiveness of this policy by monitoring: standards obtained by pupils; the proportion of pupils accessing support teaching; models of best practice; feedback from staff; the level and pattern of help; views of parents and professionals and DES recommendations.

# Ratification & Communication

This policy will be reviewed at least every two years.

This policy was ratified at a board of Management meeting on the 22nd of June 2022. This policy can be viewed by all on our school website.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Chairperson Board of Management.